

Abraham Lincoln papers

From Robert L. Pell to Cabinet Members, April 12, 1861

Pellham Farm April 12th 1861

Gentlemen

A dark cloud is about to burst on our land, that will sink everything in its descent, I hoped, and prayed, that through you, our country would have been saved from a cruel war; but I fear it is now inevitable; the last link is broken, the last wedge that sustained the Union is gone, and nothing left but destruction and desolation, the demon of discord will stalk forth through out the length and breadth of America; and all because, you gentlemen, have permitted your feelings to overcome the common interest you should feel in our beloved country; and the only possible way it can be brought back into the past state of happiness, is to become once more united in the bonds of paternity with our irritated friends and countrymen, by showing them a little kindness, what have you done to conciliate, not a single thing, have you even offered to call an extra session of congress no, have you offered to call a convention to alter the constitution, no, have you consented that they should enjoy the territories with you, no. Are you not now using every means in your power to irritate them, yes. Are you not sending useless fleets to beard them, yes. Do you not talk of sending armies into their sickly climate to be killed by thousands, yes.

I pray you for the sake of God and humanity, oh northern men to look what you are doing; some of you no doubt, as well as myself, are opposed to slavery, having been brought up to look at it as an institution repugnant alike to God and man. But gentlemen suppose the south would give up slavery, how could you return them an equivalent; do not I beg of you be fanatical, but remember that the wealth of the south lies in her plantations, and that white men cannot work them. You might judge by the negroes of the north, how perfectly unable they are to take care of themselves, and could there be a greater curse entailed upon us, than to have the 4000000 southern negroes freed, and let loose among us. Can the north expect the south to give up its wealth, its substance, to oblige the north, because a few fanatics desire it. You rail altogether too much on the word negro; believe me, he is much better off there, where he receives kind treatment; and nine out of ten of them would not leave their masters if they had the opportunity — no notwithstanding they all imagined they would be free if Lincoln was elected, have they shown the least disposition to rise— And still all our troubles have been brought upon us by this cursed race. I would not shed the blood of a single high toned southern gentleman, for all the negroes south of Mason and Dixon's line. Remember that it is no matter how right our system may be, they are not in union with the south, and though you may look upon them as superior to all others in every respect, the southern people cannot be brought to think

so; for that reason you must bear with them in their waywardness, and believe me when I say that it is not the intelligent classes on either side that are augmenting the war.

I call upon both north and south by every tie that binds you to be linked once more under the same flag, let us unfurl our proud banner to the winds of heaven and bring back to its azure heaven those stars that have left it.

Remember you are brothers, bound together by the ties of blood, goodness, and humanity; then do not bring war and bloodshed on our land; rather hear the earnest prayer of one insignificant raiser of cabbages and apples like myself, than the eternal and everlasting curse of millions now born, and to be born, if you bring on civil war, the entire responsibility rests on you.

How can you hesitate for one moment, when you look at the position our glorious country occupies. If you do, think of the deeds of our common ancestors, whose bones are crumbling to the dust, of the nobles who have passed from earth to heaven, and who if they could look down upon you, and speak; would say, conciliate the south within a week, or the curses of the widow and orphan will rise to heaven against you; for within that short period of time, all power, all control will have left you, and your country will have passed beyond your reach.

Think of your own children, and think what after ages will think of you, you will stand on earth unloved by any, and descend to the grave with none to mourn or weep your loss, can your souls be so dead, that you cannot see the state your country stands in, if so God help you— Respectfully
Yours

Robt. L Pell